THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Poems by Dorothy Reid, A. J. M. Smith, Alexa Byrne and others- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

The Sensuous Wisdom of John Keats- - Amy Lowell and Middleton Murry Reviewed by Leonie Adams- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

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The Measure

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---And a Bottle of Rum

WE live over buried treasure!
She hid it away some place
In a queer old woolen stocking
Or a queer old twisted vase.

It may be a thousand dollars,
And it may be a few red cents,
But living over buried treasure
Is enough of a recompense.

So we never look close at the crannies,
And we never dig deep in the lawn;
If you once find a buried treasure,
Your fine buried treasure is gone.

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Stones

THEY shake their heads in wonder,
They ponder as they look—
Three lean men in cutaways
Staring at a rock.

When they nail the answer
And tack it with a moral
Three lean men in cutaways
Tilt their brows with laurel.

Question

WOULD you love me if I came
Timidly and tenderly
Like the whisper of a name;

Would you love me if I stood
Certainly to meet your will,
Knowing it was somehow good;

More than if I turned and threw
In the balance of our love
Everything-including you?

A Seat Between Two Stools

I'VE flaunted you in metaphors like roses,
Dressed you in harlequin phrases till you smiled,
Called you a god, an Oberon, a child,
Made sonnets of your least-intended poses—
To what avail? Another critic closes
Another slim blue volume with a sigh.
Oh, why should any poet, and why should I
Bother the world with Grecian curls and noses?
Yet if I paint you as you really are
How they would rush with interested feet
To see this very paragon of men,
Batter the doors down, altogether mar
Something a little foolish, a little sweet.
I shall not write you poems, ever again.

Horticulture

YOU never had a bud,
A flower never grew
Above the slender green
That was the stem of you.

Perhaps you dreamed a rose,
But roses are of earth,
Blown carefully like glass
To a precarious birth.

You never had a flower—
Why do you stir the room
To colour like a rose
With visible perfume?

Dorothy E. Reid

Man's House

THERE is small silence in a room;
So long have walls defended men
They whisper garrulously over and again
Words of his mouth and tapping of his shoe;
A house, I say, talks at night
Even though ten lamps are lit,
Even though the noise therein
Silence the dead's gentle din.
Though it could be a silent place
If foot of man were bare or if man's speech
Were simple and there were nothing higher
Within the mind to tempt his reach;
Then were his house
Still and peaceful as trees are.

Metronymic

HAVING gained my kiss,
He has put me away as he would remove a clock,
Whose ticking disturbed him
When the night was still.

To What End?

TO what end, beloved?
The heart is white and still that solaced us,
And mockery will not stay to comfort us;
To what end thy dovelike gesture,
Thy dark unquiet eyes?

Jane Morrill

The Bird

I AM not merely
An overcoat for bones—
Who would wrap so warily
Skeletons?

Breast-bone and ribs enmesh
A bird in a cage
Covered for the night with flesh
To still his vocal rage,

Who now unseen and
Inarticulate awaits
One to unwind the band
And open the gates.

Free then from the flesh hood
And the cage of bone,
Singing at last a good
Song, I shall be gone

Into that far and wild
Where once I sang
Before the flesh beguiled
And the trap was sprung.

Summer Warning

WHEN one fat bee can fill an afternoon
With the last letter of the alphabet
There is some little danger to be met
In gardens or in clover or in June.

Pray not too long before a garden god,
Nor mark the shadow pausing on the dial;
Trap no stray sunbeam in a crystal vial,
Nor rest enraptured of the easy sod;

For languidly June loiters in the lane:
Some sultry summer she will wax so slow
That viscous time will pause, will cease to flow,
And the rebellious afternoon to wane,

And you'll be prisoned in an attitude—
Poised to a flower-bell or on an urn
Draped tragically—awaiting the return
Of cooler dynamism and a moving blood.

A. J. M. Smith

Blizzard Snow

MARS will shoe Pegasus tonight;
He blows his resting fires to white,
And taking cold stars from his belt,
He flings them into flames to melt.
He pulls them from the fire with tongs
And hammers them. Like three-tiered gongs
His heavy blows ring out and leap
Up windy scales like mountain sheep.

Then from his forge a whirl
Of silver wasps fly out and swirl
In angry swarms to earth. With fierce,
Quick thrusts of blazing stings, they pierce
My face with flaming needle tip,
And ruthlessly they seem to rip
My quivering skin apart,
And make each jagged wound to smart
With hissing poison. On they tear,
Madly reeling through the air.

Now when Mars has ceased to blow
His coals to flame, and embers glow,
Flecks of foam, crust-edged with frost,
Fall to the ground, nervously tossed
From the lips of Pegasus. Shod
To trample down the hard-packed sod
Of clouds, he flings his great head high
And climbs to deep draws in the sky.

Alexa Byrne

Fifteen

HAD you forgotten what the flesh must pay
For its brief inhalations of the sky ?
Between abysmal morrows and your eye,
Awhile, there hung a curtain of fair day
That cast no shadows, marred no blue with gray.
On the warmed earth you were content to lie,
Blind that the hours, like cloud-floes drifting high,
Were no less fleet by passing far away.

You lay as any doe-eyed calf has lain,
Languored with grazing—Time's untrod profound
And dews that never would be tracked again
Both noon-far worlds—till loud exhaling pain
Dusking your day, you rose and looked around.
To find a fawn cow. . writhing on the ground.

Leroy McLeod

The Dare

I PLANT black tulips in a row
That they may stick out green tongues—so—
And warn the passersby, "Have fear!
Beware of seeking joys here!"
I tend spiked dahlias, militant,
Which forbid even eyelids slant
Toward the wall. Straw flowers as dry
As scornful laughter never die,
But shuffle paper petals new
With old—nor soften under dew.
A bougainville paints my house
With purple bloom; but no carouse
Of sugared scents from may or rose
Makes amorous the garden's prose.
Beneath the moon you thought you heard
A nightingale? A mocking-bird.

Derision

GO on!
Sit in your northern home
And wrap yourself in fur!
I'll lie and watch warm foam
Crawl up the beach and purr.

Go on!
Eat tough old meats and bread—
Stuff pillows under your head!
I'll dream a sweeter dream,
And I'll eat figs and cream!

Go on!
Buy strings of diamond beads—
I'll wear a magnolia flower!
Your men are only seeds.
I've kisses every hour!

Mai Dit!

A GOLDEN hall with tapers at each end
To mark the stairs? Whose dwelling is this? What
Involved cellarage have we forgot?
Will we forget the gold as we descend?

Irene Stewart

The Measure ✱ *A Journal of Poetry*

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Edited by Léonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Lindley Williams Hubbell, Rolfe Humphries, George O'Neil, E. Merrill Root, Genevieve Taggard.
Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, and Frank Ernest Hill.
Acting Editor—Joseph Auslander.

"Tethered to the Heart"

(John Keats. Amy Lowell. Houghton, Mifflin Company. 1925.)
(Keats and Shakespeare. John Middleton Murry. Oxford University Press. 1925.)

THE hero of Miss Lowell's biography is a most fleshly plausible John Keats. Hers is a four-square work with an immense resource in data, in sound sense, in gusto, in the author's certitude that she could "compass in loving" a subject for which she needed no symbol. It is a presentation the most naturalistic conceivable. Miss Lowell declares there was not an iota of mysticism in the make-up of Keats. There is not the half an iota of mystery in her approach. After rehearsing a genealogy she says: "Here are a series of inheritances which may well have produced a poet."

Of a miscellany of relics she reconstructs "Mister John Keats five feet high" and having fixed him solidly in his milieu, attends this darling figure through the minutiae of his distressful living, his intolerable dying.

Miss Lowell had no prevailing tenet. She recoiled from sickly and perfervid versions; she gloried in vindicating Fanny Brawne; she had her aesthetic predilections; but she was before all else comprehensive. The only real bias that appears is her love for the subject and that was more productive than subversive.

This is indeed as faithful a biography as Miss Lowell could make it; and she was well, not preeminently, fitted for the task. It seems that she had a shade too much commonsense in the ordinary meaning of that phrase. There were qualities in the John Keats

she detained, thus palpable and intelligible, at her writing-desk, which would forever elude so sanguine a constitution. She was constrained to lay a good deal upon the consumption. In reading her one gets somewhat the sense of circumstantial tragedy: if there had been money, modern hygiene, a motherly Fanny! Very early Keats wrote: "A man should have the fine point of his soul taken off to become fit for this world" and at the end: "Life is too brutal for me." How would it have been otherwise?

Mr. Murry reads Keats's life in the light of his own axiom, "A man's life of any worth is a continual allegory and very few eyes can see the mystery of his life. . ." He says "Love and death have twined their arms around him"; and that to him is not rhetoric for: He is in the grip of an unfortunate passion and he is mortally sick with tuberculosis. It is a statement of the allegory.

After all what we wish to know about a man of genius is not that he took his porridge like the rest of us but wherein he is peculiar. In this respect Miss Lowell fell somewhat short. Mr. Murry, concerning himself with the poetic content of Keats, and that during the four years of his poetic life, has the advantage of an inherent emphasis. Very probably Mr. Murry's faith in the *vates sacer,* his belief in a supra-literary mystic relationship between Keats and Shakespeare, will militate against any large general credence in his findings. Yet these two contentions need not be granted in order to appreciate his contribution. To set them aside is to take a grave liberty with the thesis of a convinced man. It is not too substantial an injustice to the sum of his commentary. That is to say, one can without embracing transcendentalism, profit by the key which Mr. Murry's mystical disposition furnished him to the truth of John Keats.

As to the character of Fanny Brawne, Miss Lowell and Mr. Murry are at odds. Miss Lowell brings the better evidence. Mr. Murry the better realizes that what Fanny Brawne was is beside the point. There would always have been the "gordian complication of feelings." When Keats wrote to his brother "The roaring of the wind is my wife and the stars in the windowpane are my children" he was not simply stalling. Although he said not he did have a mind to take the moon home in his pocket; and no woman could have borne the burden which he put upon Fanny Brawne. At one moment he was crying out for "merciful love which tantalizes not"; at the next tormented and perversely enchanted by the image of a

Cressid, a Lamia, a belle dame sans merci; and yet again fiercely demanding "Is the love of God and the love of women expressed by the same word in Greek?" or saying of a lover "When I know a poor fool to be in pain about it I could burst out laughing in his face."

Miss Lowell's treatment of the poems is almost wholly technical. This is false and even cruel to the work of a man who denounced the literary as the vulgarest of all crowds and wished "never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge or experience. . . ." She often makes flashing comments, particularly on the flaws of his early work; yet despite her good technical equipment she often fails. After saying of Endymion the discerning thing "To read it is to touch the dayspring of life," she goes on in a breath with this thumping cheery appraisal of its poet:

"He was as clear as daylight in thought and expression with his feet planted firmly on the good round earth and his eyes busy beholding the beauties of a material universe which includes friendship, love, and all sorts of human intercourse as well as clouds, trees, sea, flowers and moonlight."

She sees Keats thus, without admixture of honeydew and *Endymion* as the work of a boy "in love with the sensuous in nature and letters." *Hero and Leander* is that.

Perhaps Mr. Murry stretched a point in the interests of parallelism in assuming that Keats would have become a dramatic poet very like Shakespeare. This is much as legend gives to the mother of St. Francis the curious whim through which he also was cradled in a manger. It is true that Keats talked of creating dramatic poetry; and that he recognized in the drama a superior expression of "the love of good and evil" and "the principle of beauty in all things." It is questionable whether anyone could have been a dramatic poet in the nineteenth century; or whether a born dramatist would have thrice philosophised upon his art before giving it vent. After all to Keats *King Lear* was the "fierce dispute betwixt damnation and impassioned clay" and so simply and finally he might have conceived his own King Lear.

Yet the integrity of Mr. Murry's handling is approved by his success, his actual and illuminating success, with *Hyperion.* His greater fairness to Keats is tested by his respect toward certain lines which it is shocking to deride on formal grounds.

Assume Miss Lowell to have been correct in her tender condescension toward those "truths" of costly perception. Mere sagacity, or even rightness, would not make her their best interpreter. To Mr. Murry Keats's truth is not in quotations marks, it is of profound importance. Therefore, such as it is, he is better tempered to receive it.

I think it certain that Keats himself was no such consistent and professed mystic as Mr. Murry. Yet for the most part he did believe his peculiar receptivity the touchstone to "knowledge enormous." Despite Miss Lowell's counter-assertion, he was continually and spontaneously assuming mystic postures. Because a passionate sense of being was necessary to him, the better part of his mind was subdued to his emotional nature. When he said "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts" he did not mean that he longed to dally eternally with "luxuries bright milky soft and rosy." He said this because his most tremendous thoughts came to him truly as sensations and only thoughts that came so appeared to him significant. He was so little amenable to ratiocination that he was puzzled as to how a truth could be arrived at by logical steps. "What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth." And when as surely as any evidence weigher he came upon the horrid doubt that truths thus traced "by the magic hand of chance" might not be in any absolute sense truths at all, his whole being reassured him as to their felicity.

"May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful though instinctive attitude my mind may fall into as I am entertained with the alertness of a stoat or the anxiety of a deer? . . . . Seen by a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine. This is the very thing in which consists poetry. . . If so then it is not so fine a thing as pholisophy for the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth."

A nature thus organized to instantaneous perceptions, which knew as it felt and got its knowledge sensuously toned, was marvelously endowed for poetic creation. Inevitably also it was too fine-pointed for comfortable living. His suffering was so terrific that the mere presentiment would prompt him to amazing withdrawals and renunciations. Always he was driven back upon his burden whether, as Mr. Murry believes, through a fierce honesty, heroism, and dedication, or simply because he could not help it, because his fancy was inalterably "tethered to the heart." *Léonie Adams*

The Poetry of Ferment

(Modern British Poetry; A Critical Anthology. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Edited by Louis Untermyer. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co.)

(Modern American Poetry; A Critical Anthology. Third Revised Edition. By Louis Untermyer. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co.)

THE new editions of Mr. Untermyer's anthologies bring together rather impressively many well known poems in English, British and American. Probably two anthologies of equal size could be published presenting poetry from the same period and countries which would not duplicate any that Mr. Untermyer has chosen, yet be almost as representative. There is much to choose from, and tastes differ widely. But whatever mistakes he may have made—and any anthologist is likely to make grave ones—Mr. Untermyer has done a pretty good job, and his two books are typical of their age.

What do they show? The editor says in the preface to "Modern British Poetry" that "modern British verse is smoother, more matured, and, molded by centuries of literature, richer in association. American poetry, no longer colonially imitative, is sharper, more vigorously experimental; it is full of youth, with youth's occasional crudities."

He also finds certain definite trends in British Poetry—the aesthetic movement of the 1890's, the Celtic revival in Ireland, Kipling and the mechanistic note in poetry, Masefield and the return to narrative, realistic war verse, and the turning from war to pastoral beauty which he considers most characteristic of British verse to-day.

Had a similar analysis been made for American poetry almost as great a variety could have been found. The austere piquancy of Emily Dickinson; the western urge of Joaquin Miller; the modern evangelism of Vachel Lindsay; the careless prodigality of Carl Sandburg's free verse and the careful beauty of H. D.'s; the restricted yet vivid idiomatic beauty of Frost and the less restricted yet no less vivid beauty of Robinson; the bewildering choir of younger lyrists of as many tone colors as could be imagined—all these show a wide difference among our poets.

The fact is that as one sums up recent poetic achievement in both England and America, one is struck by the great amount of activity and the uncertainty of the result. Perhaps of the entire great multitude of notable singers, Kipling and Masefield alone stand out as dominating figures in both countries. Yet they are not too generally accepted, and if one listed the various messiahs that have been set up one would weary with the labor of counting them. Poets comparable to Wordsworth and Keats and Tennyson and Swinburne may be among us, but they are not yet recognizable.

Yet the signs are all that we live in an age of poetic wealth rather than in an age of poetic poverty. The variety is not the variety of weariness, if it is sometimes that of doubt and oftener that of experimentation. It is full-blooded, resourceful, youthful. And the physical setting of the age is not the setting of decadence—that, for instance of the Roman empire, with its settled political abuses, its great social *ennui* and its social perversions.

We have on the contrary been making a social and economic adjustment so revolutionary as in itself to provide the stuff for striking poetry. The changes the scientific fever of the last fifty years have sped well on their way may seem ridiculous to many of us. They may be in many ways ignoble and tragic influences. Yet for the present at least they have quickened life rather than retarded it, and poets have never been backward about making poetry of what they detest as well as of what they love.

The fermentation of a hunderd individualities, interesting but in the large ineffectual, seems destined to give way with time to simpler and more representative manifestations. Some poet will come not, like Tennyson's bard, to sit him down in a lonely place and chant a melody loud and sweet, but to poise above the fascinating turmoil of a new world:

> He clasps the crag with crooked hands,
> Close to the sun in lonely lands,
> Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.
>
> The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
> He watches from his mountain walls,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Frank Ernest Hill

Contributors' Notes

GEORGE H. DILLON is associate editor of *Poetry,* Chicago.

DOROTHY REID is a graduate of Ohio State University, and a frequent contributor to various magazines. The Yale Press has recently published her *Coach into Pumpkin.*

JANE MORRILL is a friend of the Vachel Lindsays in far-away Spokane.

A. J. M. SMITH made his first appearance in *The Measure* a year ago, and sends these poems from Canada to celebrate the anniversary.

ALEXA BYRNE attends school in Washington. She is fifteen years old.

LEROY MCLEOD and IRENE STEWART are both Westerners, the former living in Los Angeles, and the latter in Eugene, Oregon.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, OF THE MEASURE, A JOURNAL OF POETRY, PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT CORNWALL, N. Y., FOR OCTOBER 1, 1925.

State of New York, } ss.
County of New York, }

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared Rolfe Humphries, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of The Measure, A Journal of Poetry, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publishers and Editors—Leonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Rolfe Humphries, Lindley Williams Hubbell, E. Merrill Root, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, all of 335 East 17th Street, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—None.

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2. That the owners are: Leonie Adams, Joseph Auslander, Louise Bogan, Padraic Colum, Rolfe Humphries, Lindley Williams Hubbell, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, E. Merrill Root, all of 335 East 17th Street, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding I per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 13th day of March, 1926.

FRANK S. DAMATO, New York Co. Notary Public.

(My commission expires March 30th, 1927.)

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